

# **The Ten Attributes of Successful Learners**

***Welcome to  
Thoughtful  
Teaching and  
Learning***

## **WELCOME TO THOUGHTFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING**

To what extent is a student's success in school dependent upon teachers' instructional decision making? No matter how you look at it, the answer is *a lot*. As educational researcher Mike Schmoker (2006) demonstrates conclusively in *Results Now*, instruction has by the far the largest influence on student achievement. In fact, one study cited by Schmoker (Mortimer & Sammons, 1987) shows that teaching has six to ten times as much impact on student achievement as all other factors *combined*.

But here's another question: To what extent is a teacher's success dependent upon students' academic abilities and skills? This is a question that gets significantly less attention than our first question, but it is no less important. The question is important because teachers and students have a reciprocal relationship. The success of one depends on the success of the other.

In working with the GST BOCES to establish a common language for instruction and help prepare all students for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century workplace, we developed a framework called *The Ten Attributes of Thoughtful Teaching and Learning*. The framework lives at the center of this reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning. It provides teachers with the tools of good teaching—ready-to-use, high-impact instructional techniques proven to make a difference in student achievement. But it also helps students master the tools of learning—the tools that make successful learners successful. Thus, the framework allows teachers to target both sides of the equation in the teaching-learning relationship: on the teaching side, they'll be putting the best research-based techniques into practice in their classrooms; on the learning side, students will be developing the skills and abilities they'll need to succeed in school and beyond. And perhaps best of all, the interactive student notebook that brings the framework together invites students directly into the learning process, thereby increasing their level of engagement as they practice and acquire new learning tools.

### ***The Art and Science of Learning (or, the Ten A's of Successful Learning)***

In his newest book on research-based instruction, Robert Marzano (2007) poses ten critical questions that all teachers need to address, such as *What will I do to help students effectively interact with new knowledge?* and *What will I do to engage students?* By posing and answering these questions with research-based recommendations, Marzano proposes a new and comprehensive framework for thinking about teaching. He calls his book and its framework *The Art and Science of Teaching*.

In *The Ten Attributes of Thoughtful Teaching and Learning*, we are proposing something similar, but with a special focus on learning. Put another way, we might ask: What does the art and science of learning look like? Our answer is based on six years of research into the factors that separate the most successful learners from their peers, and it comes in the form of Ten A's:

### ***The Ten A's of Successful Learning***

Successful learners...

**Anticipate** learning

**Access** their prior knowledge

**Attend** to key vocabulary terms

**Assemble** big ideas and important details through notemaking and summarizing

**Arrange** information into visual frameworks

**Ask** questions and search for answers

**Allow** time for ongoing practice

**Apply** their learning in meaningful ways

**Assess** the progress of their learning and their effort

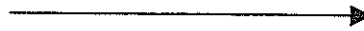
**Anticipate** and celebrate success

Remember: successful learners have a reciprocal relationship with their teachers. So, if The Ten A's represent the learner's side of the equation, what's on the teacher's side? For each A, teachers need to ask themselves a question about instructional design in their classroom.

So....

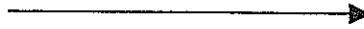
Since successful learners <b>anticipate learning</b>	<i>Their teachers ask</i> →	How do I communicate learning goals?
Since successful learners <b>access their prior knowledge</b>	→	How do I help students activate their prior knowledge?
Since successful learners <b>attend to key vocabulary terms</b>	→	How do I introduce and teach key vocabulary?
Since successful learners <b>assemble big ideas and important details through notemaking and summarizing</b>	→	How do I help students build their notemaking and summarizing skills?

Since successful learners  
**arrange information into  
visual frameworks**



How do I help students  
"see" the structures in the  
content I teach?

Since successful learners  
**ask questions and search  
for answers**



How do I help students  
become more curious and  
active learners?

Since successful learners  
**allow time for ongoing  
practice**



How do I provide  
opportunities for students to  
practice skills and rehearse  
information?

Since successful learners  
**apply their learning in  
meaningful ways**



How do I provide  
meaningful assessment  
activities that allow students  
to demonstrate what they  
know?

Since successful learners  
**assess the progress of  
their learning**



How do I provide students  
with ongoing feedback and  
guidance?

Since successful learners  
**anticipate and celebrate  
success**



How do I help students  
track their progress and  
reward their efforts?

These student behaviors, together with the questions they raise for teachers about good instruction, give us our *Ten Attributes of Thoughtful Teaching and Learning* framework. Using this framework and the tools of teaching and learning associated with each A of the framework, we can:

- Improve the quality of the instruction in every classroom,
- Engage our students deeply in the act of learning; and
- Help all our students become the successful learners and the successful workers and citizens we wish them all to be.